

Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust:

An Innovation History



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Community Innovation for Sustainable Energy research team



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Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust

The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust is a company limited by guarantee with a charitable status, consisting of an elected board of directors to represent the Isle of Gigha residents. Since its inception, the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust has created three subsidiary trading companies, which operate the island's commercial activities (such as the running of three wind turbines). These provide the Trust with financial sustainability and fund regeneration on the island. The aims of the Trust in setting up Gigha Renewable Energy Limited were, firstly, to advance community ownership and development on the island; secondly, to promote the financial, social and environmental sustainability of the island; and thirdly, to generate profits to be recycled into other community projects on the island, including housing improvements and energy efficiency measures. This innovation history traces the development of the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust from its inception (i.e. when the community bought their island from its laird in 2002) through to its development of a portfolio of renewable and energy efficiency projects.

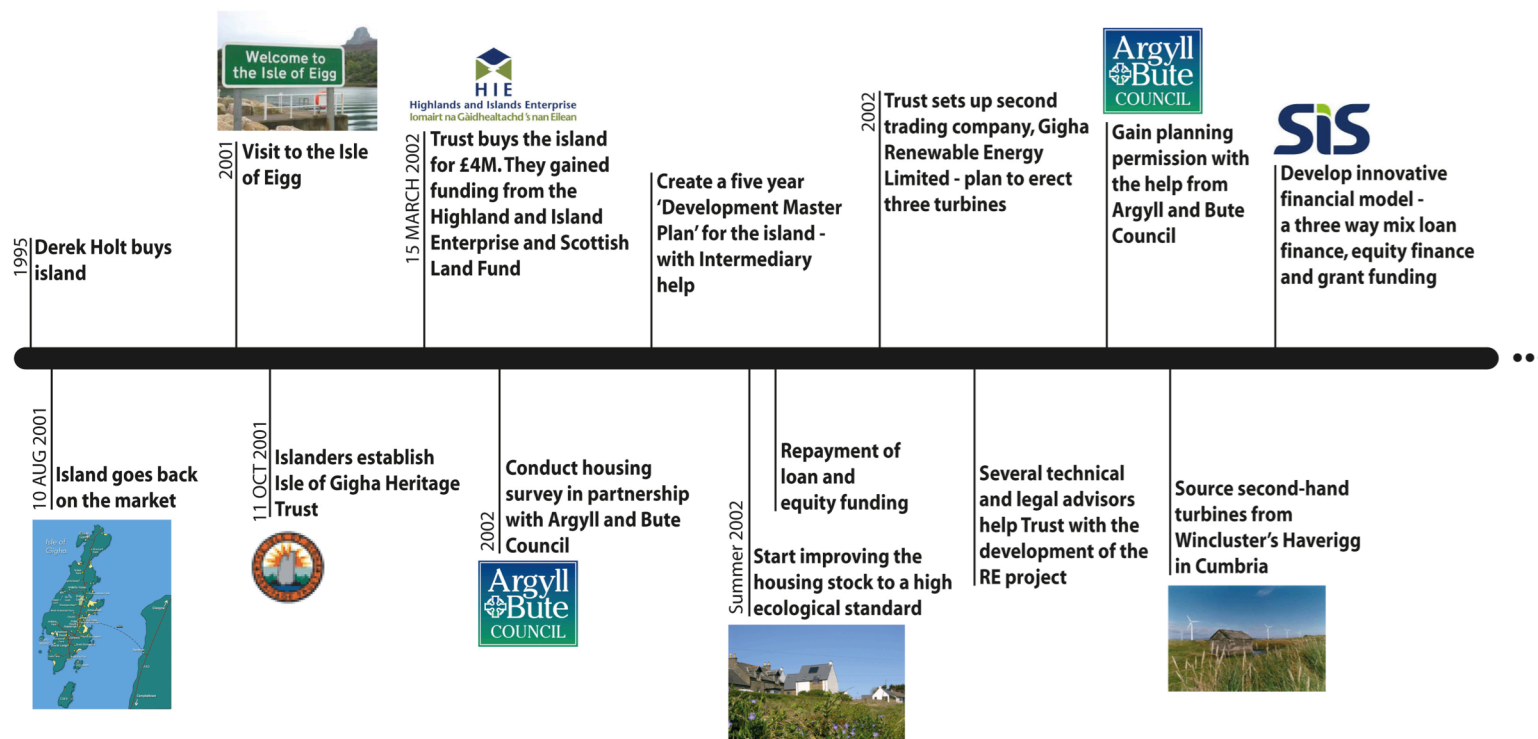
Key Insights

For the Community Innovations for Sustainable Energy (CISE) project, the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust is particularly interesting because through the island's cultural heritage set in the Scottish Highlands and Islands, and as part of a wider community regeneration development, it reveals a number of important issues as to how community energy projects grow and diffuse. In particular, it illustrates that:

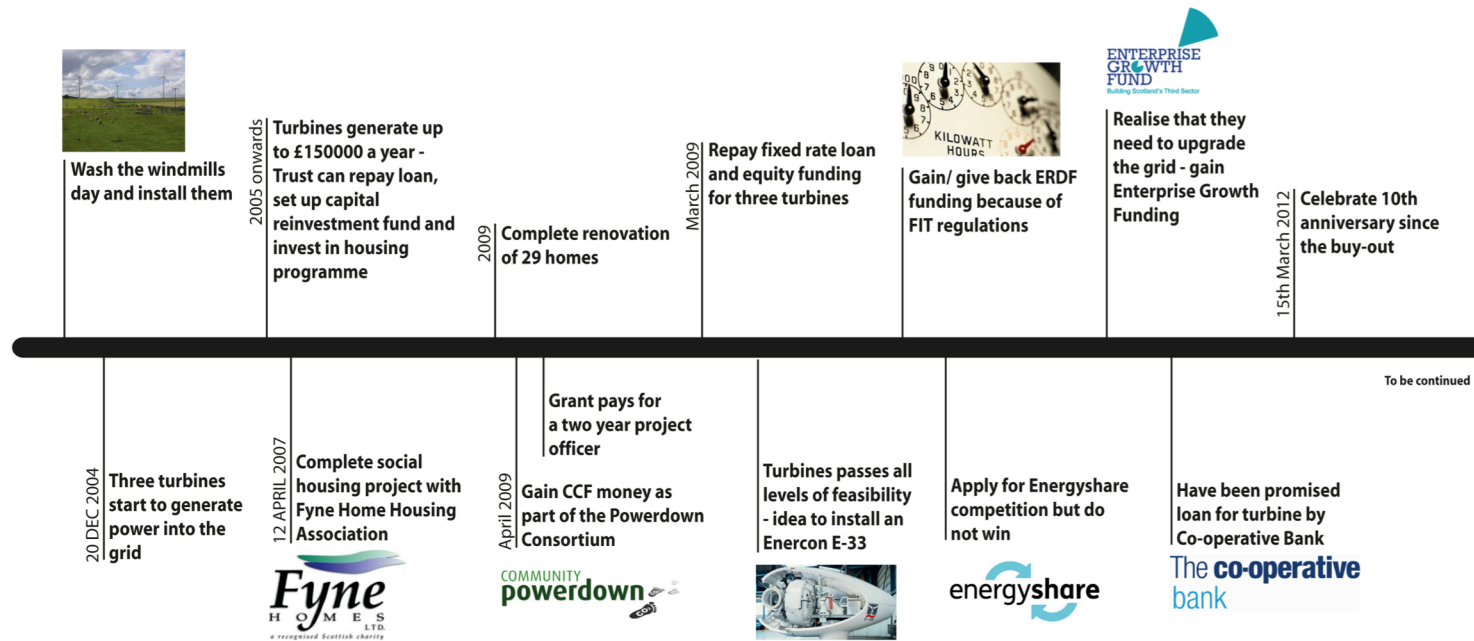
- Change in the wider context, beyond the community, and subsequent support from intermediary organisations seem to be crucial for the facilitation of community-led activities in Scotland. Such 'beneficial context' did not emerge over night but was rooted in a long history of the Scottish Highlands and Islands' cultural heritage.
- The Trust board had to fundamentally rethink the way they interacted with the community, from providing information to developing more participatory decision-making processes. The interactions between the Trust and its members need to be continuously re-evaluated. Such participatory ways of working require time, resources and training, which is often not acknowledged.
- In the case of the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust, advisors and consultants took a key role in facilitating and supporting the island's development, even before the buy-out. Most of these intermediary organisations had gained substantive knowledge about how to facilitate community buy-outs, leading them to financial sustainability through being engaged in similar developments in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.
- The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust's renewable energy project, in particular its financial model demonstrates the innovative potential that lies within community ventures and the learning that can happen if it is supported through intermediary organisations in a meaningful manner. These intermediaries provide help for aspects of projects to be replicated in other locations. This was particularly the case in the Highlands and Islands where communities

going through their own land buy-out processes dealt with a similar cultural, financial, legal, social and policy context.

- Community run enterprises have to do this whilst relying on voluntary resources and adopting legal entities and business models that do not fit their requirements. Over time they have to build up the emotional stamina to deal with volunteer fatigue and find ways to 'streamline' the complex models with which they work.
- In the early history of the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust, they successfully developed numerous of these 'deep' and 'broad' networks, creating a supportive and critical mass of intermediary actors that helped the Trust's developments. These intermediary organisations also rely on grant funding structures. So, if the funding structures become weaker for community projects, they also have an impact on intermediary organisations and the work that they can do to support communities.



Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust Timeline



The Community Innovation for Sustainable Energy Research Project

The combined pressures of climate change, peak oil and threats to energy security are increasingly seen as demanding a fundamental transition in the energy system. In this context, there has been a surge of interest and activity in small-scale, sustainable energy projects led by local communities. Examples include insulation clubs, energy awareness and behaviour change networks, and co-operatively-owned small-scale renewable energy systems. Whilst these projects have experimented with a wide range of different sustainable energy solutions, previous research has highlighted the profound challenges community energy projects face in growing, diffusing or even simply surviving. In particular, there is a tendency to treat them as marginal and parallel to mainstream energy systems and, as such, little is known about how or why community energy projects do or do not spread or grow into wider society, nor about their potential influence on wider low-carbon transitions.

The Community Innovation for Sustainable Energy (CISE) research project engages with this gap in knowledge by examining the processes under which community energy projects have spread and grown within the UK. We do this with a view to providing independent advice to policy-makers, community groups and energy businesses about the merits and processes for supporting community energy. To achieve these aims, the CISE project is undertaking a variety of research activities. These activities include working with 12 community energy projects in-depth to explore the key challenges being faced on-the-ground, the extent of networking and learning between projects, and whether this is assisting in the diffusion of community energy.

Inspired by the Institutional Learning and Change Initiative, and by Bath University's 'Lowcarbonworks' project, the individual reports on each of the 12 projects are being presented as 'innovation histories'. Unlike conventional case study reports, innovation histories aim to gather human stories of what happened during project development to provide a multi-voiced account of the innovation process. They encourage key individuals to reflect on their own actions and how they are linked with the actions of others, and making it possible, therefore, for external parties to learn from others' real-life experiences. Rather than privileging the perspective of the researcher, innovation histories are presented in a narrative format that juxtaposes quotes from core participants, the researcher's own reflections on key developments, and wider theoretical insights relating to the innovation and diffusion of community energy. These are based on accounts gathered during in-depth interviews with project members and project meetings and information gained from published materials and the project website. Participant and project anonymity has been respected where requested.

Participant
quotes

Researcher
reflections

Participant
reflections

Theoretical insights

Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust: An Innovation History

Origins: Community buy-out and setting up the Trust

The Isle of Gigha is a small island off the west coast of Scotland. It sits between Islay in southwest Scotland and the Kintyre peninsula: it measures seven miles by one mile, covering a total of 3,500 acres. The island has a strong cultural heritage that developed throughout its early history and still prevails within the people and its land today. However, changing laird ownerships have marked the Isle of Gigha, often accompanied with a divestment in the island. A thirty-year period of prosperity that began when Sir James Horlick purchased the island in 1944 was an exception. He invested in some of the islands' assets, trying to make it his home and for these efforts the islanders respected him. But after his death a time of real uncertainty and divestment in the island began. One laird was followed by the next. Instead of regarding the island as their home, the owners became 'land speculators', who purchased the island and sold it on when property values had increased without making any investments in its infrastructure. One of the owners even went bankrupt and, for over a year, the island was controlled by an investment bank with some of the islanders receiving eviction notices for their homes.

Willie: "We had one laird, he was a good laird at the start, who was Horlick of Horlicks Malted Milk, and then after Horlick died we had a chap, Landale. Well again he did bits and pieces for the island but then we had Potier who spent a lot of his money, but it wasn't his own money and he went bankrupt with the result that there was padlocks put on people's doors and they were told they couldn't make an entrance because it was now owned by the investment bank so I think that was the sickener of all..."

During the interviews, I was struck by how important Gigha's cultural heritage has been for its more recent development. It has driven the Trust's aims over time and set in motion an enormous amount of voluntary effort by the islanders and their supporters.



Derek Holt bought the island in a bankrupt state for £2.5 million in 1995. He invested money into the estate house at Achamore, but devoted only minimal amounts of money to the development of the rest of the island. Due to Derek Holt's ill health, the island went back on the market on 10 August 2001. At the time of the sale, the island was literally falling apart. Seventy-five per cent of the forty-two houses on the island were classed as 'below tolerable standard' and there was a shortage of accommodation. The population had declined from about two hundred throughout the 1960s and 1970s to ninety-eight. Jobs were extremely scarce on the island. Following the publicity of the earlier community buy-out of Knoydart and Eigg, the islanders came together in a public meeting to discuss the possibility of buying the Isle of Gigha. Initially, only fourteen islanders were in favour of the buy-out. Most of them were unsure how a community could possibly run a whole island, bearing in mind that there had been no other model than the laird's rule on the Isle of Gigha. Some islanders objected to the idea of a buy-out. However, during the meeting it was decided that they needed to gain more information about the possibilities to make an informed decision.

Willie: "They saw how they [Isle of Eigg] were progressing and thought well if they can do it why can't we do it? That is the difference when you see somebody else that is successful it gives yourself the courage to go forward..."

One might wonder whether the community could have done much worse than the laird model? This had been a model that the islanders knew... and some of the lairds were better than others. Although a potential welcome change, the community buy-out brought with it a lot of uncertainties.

Willie: "It wasn't a forced sale in any way so we were told by MPs and such like that the time was right to go for it and we commenced then with a lot of help and guidance from the outside world, HIE etc. and a lot of these bodies that helped us tremendously. It was not only money... but more so help and advisers."

Lukas (on community ownership): "I think it's about empowerment, I think that's absolutely at the heart of it. It's about being able to give people meaningful choices and influence on the assets that matter the most to their lives, you know. Along with that comes responsibility, along with that comes undoubtedly pressure, along with that also comes, you know, sustainability and a more long term view."

A steering committee was set up, consisting of six islanders evenly divided between two in favour, two opposed and two undecided (including Willie McSparran), to help gather information and learn about community buy-outs. Several assessment studies were carried out to evaluate the benefits of a buy-out with in-depth support from the Highland and Island Enterprise (HIE—the Scottish Government's economic and community development agency) and other off-island professionals (such as those who had assisted buy-outs by other communities in the region) over the following seven weeks. They looked at the islands' overall feasibility (its agriculture, housing options, legal and agricultural leases), producing a feasibility report early on in the process. Although the benefits for a community buy-out were proven to be certain, winning support for it from the islanders was a complex process. It required the steering committee to visit the Isle of Eigg and experience a community run island to unanimously support the buy-out. During a follow-up public meeting the islanders were presented with results of the feasibility study and the steering committee's recommendations. After a lengthy debate, the idea was put to the vote and passed by seventy-five per cent.

A relationship with the firm of solicitors, Anderson MacArthur (a firm that is based on the Isle of Lewis and provided legal support to buy-outs of Assynt, Eigg and Knoydart), was quickly established in order to create a legal entity (with its articles of memorandum) for the community to be able to enter buy-out negotiations. On 11 October 2001, the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust was born, as a company limited by guarantee with a charitable status. It consisted of an elected board of directors to represent the Isle of Gigha residents. The islanders did not have a lot of time to consider the different legal models, considering that there only were ten weeks between the time when the island was placed on the market and the closing date for bids to buy it. Once the decision was made to buy the island, one of the key issues was to raise the money in such a short period of time. In the end, funding came from several sources: a public appeal raised £1.5 million, £0.5 million was provided in a grant from the Highland and Island Enterprise, the National Lottery Scottish Land Fund provided both a grant of £1 million and a two-year loan of £1 million, and £150,000 (deferred for one year) raised through community efforts and donations.



At the time, the Scottish Land Fund (which was launched by the Scottish Executives with money from the Big Lottery Fund and administered by the Highland and Island Enterprise) was a way in which the Scottish government and its Executives could pursue their land reform and community-led sustainable development agenda. Such national support had not always existed. For example, the islanders of Eigg started an 'insurrectionary battle' in order to buy their island from its laird. A few years after Eigg's buy-out, such community buy-outs were actively encouraged nationally and led to the Land Reform (Scotland) Act in 2003, introducing a Community Right to Buy. The effect of the land reform agenda for the islanders of Gigha became apparent when it came to the closure day of the

It is interesting to note how important pioneering projects (such as the Isle of Eigg) are for the development of follow up projects. It does not only help communities to share information and knowledge with each other, but also to share experiences in order to build up the bravery to just go for it. In particular, visiting these communities seems to be key and witnessing the possible changes.

I was struck by the fact that experiences such as those from the Isle of Eigg were not only instrumental in providing inspiration for others to buy their island but also seemed to have paved the way for the Scottish government to actively support such adventures, and even legally encourage them through the Scottish Land Act.

Willie: "Well when we started off... We had myself who was a jack-of-all-trades and master of none... We had a schoolteacher, we had a farmer, we had a shopkeeper, we had a ferryman, we had all these people that I mean they knew what they knew as regards to their own trade. I know they were very willing to but we needed advice on housing, we needed advice on how to reconstruct the farms..."

sale. Although on the day the community bid was not the highest offer, and Derek Holt clearly stated that whoever had the highest bid would win the Isle of Gigha, the community was able to purchase the island for £4 million on 15 March 2002. After some negotiations between Derek Holt, the Scottish Executives and the Highland and Island Enterprise, he was persuaded to accept the offer made by the community. In the end the Scottish Executives provided the legal agency for the community of Gigha to execute their right to buy the island.

The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust, including its eighty members (all but two islanders became members of the Trust) and an elected board of seven directors, took over the running of the island estate in March 2002: today referred to as the start of the 'New Dawn' (Latha Ghiogha) – in March 2002. This included the management of forty-seven cottages, four farms, an hotel, quarry and 54 acres of garden. Whilst setting up the Trust, the islanders not only voted for the Trust board but also decided on how they would interact with and represent the interests of its members. The idea was that an elected development manager and a project administrator would manage the day-to-day activities of the Trust. Both would be answerable to the board of the Trust, which keeps in touch with its members through regularly conducted public meetings. At this stage the Trust directors were unsure whether these forms of interactions would work to run the Trust in a participatory manner, but they regarded it as a good starting point, in particular when realising that the hard work would start from this point onwards.

Lukas: "The HIE has been absolutely essential since the beginning, absolutely no question about that. They've provided support at all the critical points for the Trust... The reality of capacity building is giving people [communities] the support when they need it to acquire the skills that they need to do the job and then on Gigha... advisors like HIE played a big part. They were directly involved with the company I think worked extremely well..."

One of the first steps for the Trust was to take stock of what they owned and develop a plan for the islands' refurbishment, whilst at the same time pay back the loan of £1 million over two years to the Scottish Land Fund, and a sum of £150000 over a year to the Holt family. Most of the islanders felt uneasy about the fact that the Trust was in debt but at least they knew that they did not have to face these challenges on their own. Most of the 'off-island' consultants and advisors were prepared to support the island for the long haul. For example, a number of representatives of the Highland and Island Enterprise spent time on the Isle of Gigha to advise some of the decision-making processes, and one of the employees, Lorne MacLeod, was even appointed onto the Trust's board. In partnership with the Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Argyll and Bute Council, one of the first steps taken by the Trust was a survey of their housing stock. The poor condition of Gigha's housing was one of its major challenges.



For me, the Isle of Gigha buy-out highlights that with the 'right' governmental support quite a lot can be achieved at a community level. In the case of Gigha, such support gave a clear sign to the islanders and their external consultants and advisors that the community buy-out is a path worth pursuing.

Although the islanders were willing to give up a lot of their time to realise the refurbishment of the island, they needed a lot off-island support to develop the legal, technical and financial aspects of buy out. At this point in time most of these skills could not be found on the island, highlighting the key role of intermediary organisations to provide such support in a meaningful and participatory way.

Importance of a 'beneficial context'

The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust's Innovation History draws attention to the importance of 'context' (and in this case a beneficial one) for the development of community energy projects. Changes in context (such as the development of the Land Reform Act) and subsequent support (through Scottish Executives) seem to be crucial for the facilitation of community-led activities in Scotland. Nevertheless, such 'context' did not emerge over night but was grounded in a long history of the Scottish Highlands and Islands' cultural heritage, in particular considering the divestment of the islands through laird ownerships, the resulting strong bond between the islanders, and the early community buy-out activities led by the Isle of Eigg. Such shared cultural heritage and community efforts to get buy-out legislation enacted in Scotland, eased the replication process of projects between the islanders. Although shared intermediary organisations (such as the Highlands and Islands Enterprise) played a key role in sharing knowledge and helping projects to spread, it was the exchange of experiences and seeing what other communities had achieved after the buy-out that made a real difference.

Developing a master plan for the Island and repaying the loan

The housing survey found that over seventy-five per cent of the stock taken on by the Trust was 'below the tolerable standard', with an additional twenty-three per cent classed as 'in serious despair'. As well as demonstrating that the quality of the houses was poor, the survey showed that there was a severe lack of housing on the island with a number of 'hidden homeless' (i.e. parents or siblings providing homes for adults). The survey concluded that Gigha's housing situation was estimated to be the worst housing in Scotland, demonstrating to the Trust the scale of the task ahead. The Trust board, its manager and members decided to develop a five-year 'Development Master Plan', including a £6 million 'Housing Improvement Programme' to tackle the current situation. Early on they decided that the plan needed to address the following six areas: 1) Freedom from debt, 2) Housing strategy, 3) Local economy, 4) Social infrastructure, 5) Agriculture and, 6) Sustainable development. Plans for energy efficient housing, renewables and agriculture were prioritised in order to upgrade the housing stock on the island and create a secure income for the Trust.

Lukas: "I mean at the time of the buy out it was very clear that the island needed a lot of investment and fundamentally the housing was always going to be the biggest challenge and that remains the same to date."

A strong and clear 'vision'

Much innovation theory emphasises the significance of developing clear and strong 'visions' that allow a wide variety of actors to support and buy into the innovation in question. In the case of the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust, the creation of such a vision seemed to have been extremely successful and one that survived the test of time (with only a few slight adjustments), as stated by the business manager. It is not that the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust had to develop this vision from scratch; considering that it was part of a larger 'movement' of community buy-outs with a strong cultural heritage to support visions for a better future. Moreover, key actors (such as some of the Scottish Executives) had already 'bought into' this vision and strongly supported it. Most actors even actively encouraged and helped to facilitate the creation of these visions and their realisation through developing numerous projects – bringing them together into a master plan for the island.

This Innovation History mainly concentrates on the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust's energy and renewable projects, considering the CISE's focus on sustainable energy. It is, however, important to note that Gigha's energy projects have developed in a wider agenda of community empowerment and regeneration.

Developing the master plan with the community and the advisors

The Trust board and its manager took a leading role in creating the first draft of the master plan. Nevertheless, they were keen for the Trust members to get engaged in commenting on the plan right from the start. Although the Trust board was keen to gain input from their members, the initial approach of finding facts, presenting possible pathways and voting for approval initially caused tensions between the board and its members. After some long discussions between them, these tensions were resolved because they decided that from now onwards the Trust would need to present their findings of possible pathways at an earlier stage of the development process and in much more depth. As a result the Trust board thought about numerous ways to widen the means through which information was shared (such as through the distribution of newsletters, conduction of questionnaires, holding of members meetings and setting up of working groups) between the board and its members.

In addition to developing a participatory approach of engaging the islanders, a major part of the Trust's role was to encourage other organisations (such as outside investors, governmental bodies and community members) to take an active role in the islands development process. The Trust board received substantial help from several government organisations, Argyle and Bute Council, and numerous professional consultants to gather all the necessary information for the development of the master plan. The Glasgow-based architectural firm, Anderson Bell Christie, took a particularly key role in developing several sections of the plan. Similar to their own approach, the Trust board was keen for the firm to involve their members in the process. The architects held several workshops on the island and organised members meetings in order to come up with a design guide for future houses on Gigha (including issues of their appearance and ecology) that was accepted by the community. The complete master plan for the island took over a year to finalise, including a six-year improvement plan for the existing housing stock.

Lukas: "You can't get around the fact that doing things properly in a community minded way can sometimes just be more expensive, you know. Using volunteers isn't the cheap option... You're actually not paying people but you actually have to invest time into them and you have to support them and it seems to take longer, all of these things."

Even though there was a strong sense of community on the island, its members still had to learn how to work together in running the island. A lot of the innovation was organisational – experimenting with how to enable the Trust, its members, and partner organisations to work in ways that were legitimate in the eyes of the islanders.

I was struck by the fact that the Trust was able to find external companies that would actively engage with the community alongside their work on the island. These partnerships must have been extremely beneficial to get the community engaged in the development of the island.



Towards more participatory processes

Within theories of innovation, radical changes require not only 'first-order' learning (which involves gradually getting better at solving problems) but also 'second-order' learning (which involves the redefinition of the problem). Second-order learning is often grounded in a fundamental rethink of how problems are defined and what solutions are considered appropriate. The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust's efforts to include the community in the island's development processes required some 'second-order' learning. The islanders thought that provision of information followed by a voting system left too much control in the hands of the Trust. The Trust board had to fundamentally rethink the way they interacted with the community, from providing information to developing more participatory decision-making processes. This reconsideration has not just occurred once but is part of a continuous process. The interactions between the Trust and its members need to be continuously re-evaluated. Such participatory ways of working require time, resources and training, which is often not acknowledged.

Work starts on the refurbishment of Gigha's housing stock

The housing survey demonstrated that the Trust required £2.91 million to improve their current housing stock. From the beginning the Trust board and its advisors were extremely successful in gaining grants because of their innovative approach in wanting to improve their houses to a high ecological standard. Work on the first houses could start in the summer of 2004, after gaining two thirds of the housing improvement costs in grants from the Argyll and Bute Council and Scottish government. Energy efficiency standards and the visual appearance of the houses (considering the natural appearance of houses on Gigha) were understood to be very important in the design guide. In addition to refurbishing the houses, the Trust developed a housing allocation plan in partnership with Homehunt in order to create a fair, transparent and easy to understand system. Although progress was made on housing and other development on the island, in the back of their minds, the Trust and its members knew that they still had to find ways to repay the loan.

Repaying the loan

Alongside getting on with the housing improvements, the Trust and its members were under extreme pressure to repay their debt of £1,150,000 to the Scottish Land Fund and Holt family. At the time two options were identified to repay the loans. Firstly, to continue with the extensive fundraising efforts led by the islanders; and secondly, to sell assets owned by the Trust to third parties. The main funding activities consisted of setting up a Friends of Gigha group (who pay a monthly subscription to be part of the group), encouraging public donations and establishing an annual folk music festival on Gigha (the first one was held in September 2003). Although a lot of voluntary efforts were put into organising these events (the islanders dedicated a lot of their time and creativity into these activities), the majority of the debt repayment money came from the sale of Trust owned land.

Lukas: "It was a far too short a period of time and too much money. Looking back at it now... if you take an owner of a business, you have just started your business up, would you say right, we'll take a million pounds out for the first 2 years."

Lukas: "It's [Gigha] not an anomaly, it can be replicated in any environment if people are willing to put in the work and if the support is put in place and of course meaningful control... tokenistic nonsense that's what turns people off, you know, if you are just doing something and then you find actually you're not being listened to or it isn't making any kind of a difference you just lose people".

For me, the efforts that went into repaying the loan really demonstrate what communities can achieve if they are supported in a meaningful manner and work towards a common cause. But how easy is it to actually replicate this galvanisation of voluntary efforts, in particular in places where people are less bound through their culture heritage?



Willie: "My brother... had to leave because his wife was ill but there was no way he would have got a house here... they had to go off the island and find a home for themselves. If it was today he would have had the opportunity at least to lease one and probably build one for himself which he would have been able to do."

The sale of the laird's house Achamore to an American businessman initially caused contention among the islanders, which was eased once they realised that the businessman wanted to set up a headquarters for his flower essence business on the island (also providing a handful of local jobs). Some land was also released for sale to islanders to build their own homes, to Argyll and Island Enterprise for the construction of three craft units, and Fynes Homes Housing Association to build some new affordable homes on Gigha. After two years of hard effort, the Trust could repay the £1 million loan, removing the debt that was incurred to make the purchase of the island possible. At this stage the island's population had grown to 123, and six privately owned houses had been built.

Developing a wind turbine project: The three ladies

From the beginning, one of the main priorities for the Trust was to investigate the possibility of financial sustainability for the island and move away from reliance on grant assistance. Shortly after buying the island, the Trust set up their first subsidiary trading company, Gigha Trading Ltd., in order to create some financial sustainability for the Trust: this subsidiary operates the island's hotel and other commercial activities. In 2002, one of the board members, Alan Hobbett, with the help of the technical advisor, Dr Colin Anderson, had the idea of setting up a second subsidiary trading company, Gigha Renewable Energy Limited. His plan was to install a small community owned wind farm on the island, selling power into the national grid and therefore creating an additional income for the Trust. The three main aims of setting up Gigha Renewable Energy Limited were firstly, to advance community ownership and development of the island; secondly, to promote the financial, social and environmental sustainability of the island; and thirdly, to generate profits to be recycled into community projects on the island, including housing improvements and energy efficiency measures.

An integral part of developing the idea was to convince the members of the Trust that the installation of wind turbines would be of benefit to the island. The process of finding consensus between the members was not an easy one. The Trust provided numerous materials from the feasibility study and other material but some members were sceptical. At the end of the discussion, the whole community was in support of the project except one person, but he agreed that the wind turbines would potentially benefit everyone greatly on the island. Eventually, the vote for the installation of three wind

Willie: "... and if we don't keep the members with us who we depend on when you go for planning permission for instance who are 100% for turbines. If you start going above them and telling the outer world before they know what's going on they'll say why bother with us."

For me, the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust demonstrates that some 'community energy' groups regard the development of renewable energy projects as a way of meeting their wider vision of creating empowered and sustainable communities.

turbines on the Isle of Gigha was unanimous. Throughout the two-year process from conception to the erection of the turbines, there were continual community consultations to inform members about the progress, and in order to make decisions together and provide an opportunity for people to get involved in the project.

Lukas: "Colin is still very actively involved with our new turbine projects... we've had a quantity surveyor, an accountant, and they have been very important. I mean, you know, it's one of these ironies, you know, the technical advisers can actually sometimes be your most stable heart... we're getting input from people that, you know, it's even a little bit over and above what, you know, what a normal professional service would involve..."

The feasibility and environmental impact assessment assured the Trust and its members that the Isle of Gigha would be an excellent place to put up wind turbines. Several technical and legal advisors supported the Trust throughout the various development processes. The two technical advisors appointed to the project, Dr Colin Anderson and Charlie Robb (Element Engineering), were crucial in developing both assessment reports. Both of them are still involved today as technical advisors to the Trust. Additionally, a quantity surveyor (Morham and Brochie), visual impact analyst (Land Use Consultant Ltd), and archaeological surveyor and facilitators (Argyll and the Islands Enterprise), were hired for the environmental impact assessment, whilst TC Young solicitors worked on the numerous legal requirements. Most of the advisors were also crucial in sourcing turbines and obtaining planning permission. With significant help from Argyll and Bute Council's planning department and full consent from the islanders, the obtaining of planning consent was a pretty straightforward process. Even the sourcing of the wind turbines turned out to be more lucrative than the Trust first hoped.

It struck me how successful the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust has been in galvanising off-island support for their projects, creating in-depth relationships with consultancies and advisors who often 'went an extra mile' to realise projects.

Important role of intermediary organisations

Strategic Niche Management theories stress the key role of intermediary organisations to connect groups with one another in order to identify common challenges and ways to overcome them. In the case of the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust, advisors and consultants (deriving from the public, private and third sector) took a key role in facilitating and supporting the island's development even before the buy-out. Most of these intermediary organisations had gained substantive knowledge of how to facilitate community buy-outs, leading them to financial sustainability through being engaged in similar developments in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust could gain access to technical, legal and financial advisors who had gained very specific knowledge of how to set up a community ownership model in this particular locality. These advisors engaged with the Trust in-depth and face-to-face, sitting on their board and visiting the community on a regular basis. Moreover, these intermediary organisations 'bought into the idea' that they needed to facilitate their support in such a way so that, over time, the community could reduce their dependency on expert interventions: the communities could take direct decisions over the development of their island. In order for such support to exist, governments need to actively invest resource into the community sector.

At the time of sourcing the turbines, many smaller wind farms across Europe repowered their machines (replacing smaller machines with larger ones), increasing the availability of good quality and lower cost second-hand turbines. This second-hand market made the Gigha project financially feasible. Three pre-commissioned turbines, Vesta's V27 that were decommissioned at Wincluster's Haverigg in Cumbria, caught the eye of the Trust and its advisors. Each had a minimum of eight years of their design life left, and given the V27's reputation as the 'Honda 125' of wind turbines when regularly maintained, the Trust was hopeful that they could significantly prolong their design lifetime.

The wider context in which these projects are being set up seems to be very important. Opportunities (such as the repowering of a wind farm) can make a real difference to these projects, in particular getting access to good quality second hand machines.

Willie described the V27s as 'the grey Fergies' of the wind turbine world - a comic reference to the trusty old tractors beloved of Highland crofters!

With the help of the advisors, they could also estimate their potential yearly earnings with the three turbines. Considering the anemometer readings, the installed capacity of each turbine (i.e. 220 kilowatts) and the agreed rate per unit with the power purchaser (Green Energy), they estimated a gross annual income of £150,000.



Before the Trust could purchase the wind turbines, a business model and a combination of funding sources needed to be established. Whilst developing the project, the Trust came up with various models to finance the project. The final model (devised by Alan Hobbett) was comprised of a three-way mix of loan finance, equity finance and grant funding. Grants of £50,000 and £82,000 were secured from the Fresh Futures, Sustainable Communities Fund (consisting of National Lottery funding administered by Forward Scotland), and the Scottish Community and Householder Renewable Initiative (consisting of Scottish Executive money administered by the Highlands and Islands Enterprise/Alienergy), equity holdings (ordinary shares) of £80,000 and £40,000 were taken by the Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust and a commercial loan finance of £148,000 was provided by the Social Investment Scotland. This mix provided a total of £440,000 for the upfront capital costs.

Traditional lenders would most likely have found the Trust's community-owned wind farm project difficult to fund (because it was an unconventional business model), but it was exactly the type of venture the Social Investment Scotland and Highlands and Islands Enterprise were meant to support. For example, the formation of Social Investment Scotland (initiated by Scottish Executives in collaboration with four clearing banks in Scotland) was a way of providing loan financing to social enterprises that are normally excluded by traditional lenders. Still, most of the money was not given to the Trust for free; the funding model for the wind farm project was a purely commercial one (with the exception of the grant funding). The loan from Social Investment Scotland (provided at a commercial rate) needed to be repaid over a five-year period, and the one from the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust over two years. They had to pay a six per cent dividend on the shares from the Highlands and Islands Enterprise, which in turn were meant to be bought back by the Trust after five years, once all the debt had been repaid.

In addition to repaying the loans and equity finance, the financial model included a capital reinvestment fund that was meant to be built up over time to ensure that the Trust could finance the

I was struck by the fact that the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust was 'breaking new grounds' when developing their renewable project, in particular in relation to their financial model. A model that is said to have been replicated by numerous communities since Gigha.

The Trust and the community quickly found themselves in some complex financial negotiations. Owning the land gave them an asset, against which they could raise money, but all the same, these were significant sums.

maintenance, repair and, finally, the replacement of the turbines. This financial model, with a mix of grant, equity and loan finance from a few sources, has been regarded as extremely robust. Warren and McFadyen have suggested in the Land Use Policy journal in 2010 that a further four community projects have replicated Gigha's financial model when they developed their local renewable energy project. In the end, it took the Trust two years to develop this model and bring the project to its installation phase.

Learning, innovating and replicating

Innovation theories draw attention to the kinds of learning processes that innovators often need to go through to ensure that their innovations work across different contexts. The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust's renewable energy project, in particular its financial model, demonstrates the innovative potential that lies within community ventures, and the learning that can happen if it is supported through intermediary organisations in a meaningful manner. These intermediaries (and interactions between communities) can help with aspects of projects to be replicated in other locations. This was particularly the case in the Highlands and Islands where communities dealt with a similar cultural, financial, legal, social and policy context. These learning processes need to be shared between numerous actors; they take time and require resources that did not exist prior to the Trust.

Willie: "The problem with living on an island, you're depending on the ferry to bring them [the turbines] across so you must be sure that they'll fit on to the ferry, you must be sure that they get down to the ferry on the mainland side and you must be sure they'll get off the ferry on this side and to your chosen site."

Installing the wind turbines

After setting up a grid connection agreement with Scottish and Southern Energy and arranging agreements with civil and electrical contractors, the Trust and its members were ready to receive the three turbines. It was a spectacular sight seeing the turbines being transported from the ferry down to the site. Their small size (30m) meant that the turbines could be dismantled for transportation so that the small island ferry could get all three turbines safely onto the island. On the island the lorries were able to manoeuvre round the tight corners on the island roads to get them to their final site. The sense of ownership of the turbines was deepened through organising a 'Wash the Windmills Day' and setting up a competition to name them. On the day islanders turned up with buckets and mops to wash the turbine blades (that had become covered in dirt during their transport) before they could erect them with the help of the Strathclyde fire brigade.



On 20 December 2004, the three turbines, Creideas (Faith), Dochas (Hope) and Carthannas (Charity) – the three ladies, started to generate power into the grid after being commissioned by VESTA. It took about six weeks between installing the turbines and producing the first power. The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust became Scotland's first community-owned and grid connected wind farm. The Trust could finally set up the second subsidiary company, Gigha Renewable Energy Limited, and a price for the electricity could be negotiated with the power purchaser, Green Energy UK, through the ProGen scheme. The idea was to give the profits made from selling the electricity back to the charitable parent company, the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust, in order to plough them into regeneration projects such as the on-going £4 million housing refurbishment programme carried out on the island homes.



Refurbishment of the old housing stock: Creating warm, dry and affordable homes

Since 2005, onwards the three turbines have generated up to £150,000 of profit a year, which has enabled the regular repayment of the loan, the creation of a capital reinvestment fund and the development of refurbishment projects on the island. On average, about £85,000 a year from the wind farm has been spent on the programme to renovate houses. The Trust gained additional grants from the government's Rural Empty Properties Fund and Communities Scotland, and a 20-years loan from the Tridos Bank to finance the renovations.

By 2009, twenty-nine homes had been renovated. Although this has meant higher rents, it has brought higher standards, warmer living conditions and lower energy bills. Moreover, these efforts have moved the islanders more closely to their vision of creating warm, dry and affordable homes for all so that the islanders in the near future can meet their housing needs and preferences. The rent increases for tenants are calculated so as to be less than the savings in bills. The amount of refurbishment needed on the existing housing stock was so great that it would have been easier to build new houses, but refurbishment was chosen to maintain the heritage of the island. Coal heated houses have been upgraded to log-burning stoves combined with electric or oil heating. The first refurbishment projects were targeted at families and pensioners without central heating. After those groups had a refurbished home, a decision was taken to start other refurbishment work from the south to the north of the island.

Although the turbines seem to have made a difference to the Trust's financial sustainability, they still had to rely on grant funding and loan finance to pay for the refurbishment work. Getting into debt as part of the community buy out was a real step for the islanders. I am wondering whether these financial decisions become easier over time.



Andy: "The council has been involved from day one. They've been really there from the outset. They were involved with the housing survey and they've been the main funder of the housing renovation programme..."

The Argyll and Bute Council (in addition to some of the other consultants) have been actively involved in supporting the housing development programme both financially as part of the development plan, and with expert advice from day one. Councillors have regularly joined meetings and tried to maintain an active relationship with the Trust and its members. The fact that the council was willing to adapt their initial local plan to match what was laid out in the Isle of Gigha Heritage's master plan demonstrated a strong commitment by the local authority. In the end, the local plan was grounded on participatory decision-making processes.

The amount of support the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust gained over the seven years seems to have been tremendous. This support was not only based on providing advice, knowledge and resources but also to legitimise their plans, giving confidence and easing some project development steps (such as planning).

During the same period of refurbishing Gigha's homes, the building consortium (that was created for the housing improvement programme) was involved in the creation of eighteen new homes built by Fyne Homes, a social housing association. Fyne Home Housing Association, which operated locally, created a partnership with the Trust and, together with the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, developed a design competition to find an architectural firm that could work with the Trust's vision and involve the Trust's members throughout the whole process. In the end the architectural firm, Crerar & Partners were selected for the commission. The Trust and the housing association agreed to use three local builders to build the eighteen homes and set up some building apprenticeships. On 12 April 2007, HRH Princess Anne officially declared the houses open. Most of the homes were built with wood burning stoves and, where efficient, with solar water heating.

Keeping the 'Three Ladies' going

Two years after installing the windfarm, the turbines have generated over 4300000 kWh of electricity. The continuous maintenance of the turbines has been an integral part of keeping the turbines running. At first one of the islanders, Simon Munro (a renewable energy consultant), accepted a staffed role to look after the wind turbines on a weekly basis for about nine months until Andy Oliver, a local engineer, took over his position. Ever since Andy has been the main contact person with VESTA, making sure that the turbines are being inspected twice a year and necessary repair and part replacement work is being conducted in order to lengthen the lifetime of the turbines. Although the relationship with VESTA has changed over the years, in particular after the company was restructured, they have honoured their service contract with the Trust. At the time of the installation only a few windfarms existed in Scotland and therefore the Trust was able to set up a worthwhile

Although refurbishing the houses to a high ecological and efficiency standard fitted into the sustainable vision of the Trust for the island, at the time considering such efficiency measures helped the Trust to gain additional support and grants.

service contract with VESTA. Even though the V27s have a reputation of being extremely durable on the island, the service contract was very useful when one of them was hit by a lightning strike (causing quite a bit of damage), and a roof panel blew off another one after extreme winter conditions.



Andy: "The relationships between the subsidiary boards and the main boards have got extremely fraught at times and that's just been a communication issue... it's just the way it is, bloody difficult to organise and try and see your way through it. It's just all based on complex theories of intertwining companies."

Andy: "We need to constantly be aware that we need to communicate better... it's finding out a happy medium between keeping everyone informed of everything that's going on, retaining a level of confidentiality and stamping out rumours and innuendo which fill the gap between the two."

Willie: "From a staff perspective it's a small organisation with very, very high goals and very often the types of skills that are needed to deliver projects aren't necessarily to be found on the island so we had people relocating, having to adjust to living in a small community."

In addition to maintaining the wind farm, another crucial aspect of keeping the wind turbine project going has been the continuation of Gigha Renewable Energy Limited and the smooth running of the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust. Five board members make up the renewable team who get elected once a year. The Trust nominates one of its directors to the board of Gigha Renewable Energy Limited whilst the islanders vote for the rest of the directors. The overlap of one director was set up to guarantee good communication between the Trust and its subsidiary companies. In practice, however, this model has not always worked too well. Some of the Trust members feel that having a charitable Trust and two subsidiary companies is a rather complex model for a community to run. It requires lots of administrative work. The communication between all the parties is not always a straightforward process. One other key issue has been that the charitable Trust is not legally allowed to act in a beneficiary nature towards one of the subsidiary companies, making it near to impossible to provide financial support to it if needed.

Moreover, over the past years, it has been extremely challenging to attract new board members for the Trust and the renewables energy board from the community to replace existing directors. These are voluntary positions, which require individuals to give up a lot of their time. For example, the Trust meets up about once a week to discuss current developments. Not all islanders are able or willing to commit to such a position. Overall there are seventeen vacancies for directors that have to be filled, which is more than ten per cent of the island's population (and this does not only include the adult population). This shortage has created a situation where some of the current Trust members have been on the board for years. On the one hand this brings some positive aspects to the running of the Trust, considering that there is a lot of continuity, but on the other hand it has caused a situation where people get tired, feel unable to stand down and are unable to recharge their batteries. Particularly, the business manager of the Trust (one of the few paid positions) has been under immense pressure to try and keep the complex community model going. This pressure has sometimes been so strong that they could only do their job for a few years. Consequently, within the last ten years the Trust already had to look five times for a new business manager. Lukas Lehmann,

It seems to me that community run companies often have to adopt organisational models and legal entities with mainstream business enterprises in mind. These mainstream businesses are, however, often not run by volunteers and therefore do not seem applicable in the community setting.

Andy: "We've been going for 10 years and we've had 5 business development managers in 10 years... one of the issues that has come up, and is going to be addressed is, we need to make sure that we don't burn people out too quickly."

Willie: "The people of the Western Islands, it was always, you know, everybody was in contact with each other and they helped each other, it's a tradition of the islands of Scotland, everybody helps each other."

Lukas: "If you think about it, in a normal business, the first few years are the ones where you invest. You don't take money out of the business. Gigha had to take £1 million out in the first two years. You'll find it's not a coincidence that, after Gigha, none of the other community buyouts were asked to pay that back. Instead, the island has been forced to play a long game of catch-up, borrowing more money in order to improve and expand."

Willie: "So instead of three dancing ladies we've got three dancing ladies and a bigger one."

the current business manager, has been in the role for three and a half years and therefore has currently been the longest standing manager.

In order to deal with such a turnaround of people and to maintain such a complex community model, the board of Trustees has developed numerous induction packs for directors and business managers, in which they introduce the Trust and its subsidiary companies. The packs outline the basic running of the Trust and its history. Whenever a new member starts they are 'deluged' with minutes of meetings collected over the last six months and an induction pack. In addition to finding more and more ways to 'streamline' their community venture, the business manager and board members have tried to disseminate their learning across the UK, not only through conferences and seminars but also by hosting visitors. This sharing of learnt lessons has been prominent between the Scottish Highlands and Western Isles (considering the shared history between them) but also occurred more throughout the UK and European, such as hosting visitors from Sweden.

Keeping going: Building stamina and adapting to changes

Strategic Niche Management theories highlight that innovations diffuse through three processes: replication (for example, being adopted in a different locality), translation (for example, being adopted to work in mainstream settings) and scaling-up (for example, a growing project portfolio). Although the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust's financial model has been replicated and they continuously attempt to grow their project portfolio, what often gets overlooked in niche theories is that existing projects need to be kept alive over time. Community run enterprises have to do this whilst relying on voluntary resources and adopting legal entities and business models that do not fit their requirements. Over time they have to build up the emotional stamina to deal with voluntary fatigue and find ways to 'streamline' the complex models with which they work (such as creating introduction packs).

Coming up with more sustainable projects for the island: The fourth turbine

Repaying the loan and developing a concept for a fourth turbine

The Trust was able to repay the fixed rate loan for the three ladies over a five year period, and in year five (March 2009) bought back the equity held by the Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Most of the Trust members were relieved when the Trust was able to repay the loan and equity, being in debt was not really a common practice on the island. The feeling of whether they have made the right decision in installing the turbines prevailed for quite a long time. Through considering the success of the first wind farm, voices started to emerge, advocating the possibility of installing a fourth turbine. The background for this idea was two-fold. Firstly, although the housing improvement programme had been a success, the cost of it and the lack of grant funding meant that the Trust had to invest much more into the island's economy than expected. Secondly, the Trust had to put more money aside into their capital investment fund to maintain and replace the turbines than originally budgeted, considering that the price of second hand wind turbines has substantially increased since they bought the original ones.

I was amazed that the Trust and its subsidiary companies still run rather smoothly, considering that they have to find seventeen directors each year in a population of 157. Gigha seems to have a tremendous amount voluntary resource, and some of its residents a lot of stamina.



Willie: "With that success [of the first wind farm] you know that the next one is going to be success. You're more sure it's going to be a success than you would be if you were starting anew. It's taken the iffy bit out of it."

Lukas: "Over the years we've standardised ways of dealing with these things... You know who your lawyers are going to be; you have paperwork, pre-drafted paperwork, all these kinds of things to make it easier. It's not all totally new any more but it's still laborious..."

The plans towards a fourth wind turbine got off to a good start when the community voted unanimously for another turbine in October 2009 and the Trust won some Climate Challenge Fund (CCF) money as part of Powerdown Consortium (a grouping of twenty-seven communities across Scotland organised by Community Energy Scotland and the Development Trust Association Scotland). The grant paid for a two-year project officer, Remi Wassermann, who was responsible for implementing a Community Awareness Raising Scheme on Gigha. The scheme involved the organisation of several activities, including both the community and the local primary school, covering energy efficiency, renewable energy, recycling/composting (such as the installation of two warm composters for the school), sustainable transport and local food production. Remi arranged a series of events informing the islanders about energy efficiency measures and local fuel consumption options to proactively reduce their carbon emissions. Further, he assessed the financial and technical feasibility of installing an anaerobic digestion plant on the island, considering that the four dairy farms could be connected to it (it turned out to be too expensive without a grant support) and worked towards the installation of a fourth turbine.

After two years, the fourth turbine has passed all levels of feasibility. In order to support Remi's efforts and have a dedicated team for the fourth turbine, the Trust set up Gigha Green Power Limited, their third subsidiary company. They conducted a full economic appraisal and environmental impact assessment, and successfully applied for grid connection and planning permission. The decision was made to install an Enercon E-33 in consultation with Community Energy Scotland and the Island of Tiree (who had an existing machine). At the time the turbine had been considered to be as very efficient, producing up to 330kW and, because it was only slightly taller than the original turbines, it fitted perfectly between the existing wind turbines. The community was consulted along every step of the development process, including several votes on crucial decisions. The directors tried to gain assurance from Ofgem that the scheme would be eligible for the Feed-in-Tariff, negotiated tenders with contractors and the wind turbine manufacturers, and even set up a test run to make sure the slightly larger turbine could be delivered to the site.

Dealing with a changing funding context

Although previous doubts by the community had almost vanished because of the success of the first renewable project (realising that they had a very good site to make electricity out of wind and the

For me, the Powerdown Consortium highlights the real potential of creating more formalised networking activities between intermediaries and community energy groups that are based on in-depth and face-to-face interactions – here created through the employment of a project officer.

Willie: "We were victims of our own success... I think the easiest part was the buy-out because everybody is eager and desperate to give you money but once you get your feet from below the table, they say well they're doing all right, thank you and they move off, rightfully too I suppose because there are others that need the funding..."

Lukas: "The money situation has definitely got a lot worse, it's much more difficult both to find long term loans or grants... that's the reality. So it means that you have to be more innovative and you can do less, I mean that's also a reality as well. There is funding there, it isn't that it's completely impossible; you have to effectively extend more of your resources to find it and to deal with it."

infrastructure to deliver and install it), the funding context had changed over the intervening three years in Scotland, creating several teething problems for the project. In addition to a lack of funding, the Trust needed to upgrade the local grid and deal with some changing relationships with their advisors. Today, the hands of the Highlands and Islands Enterprise are much more tied. During the buy-out and first wind turbine projects they had been a crucial advisor along many critical steps. Although the Highlands and Islands Enterprise tried to do their best in supporting Gigha such in-depth support no longer exists because of a shortage of resources. Even though the Trust and its members have greatly improved conditions on Gigha, they feel that there is still a lot to learn. For instance since the departure of Remi, most of the technical support for the turbine project has derived from off-island professional consultants.

Some of the islanders felt that they have partly been 'victims of their own success'. People and funders regard the island a success story and therefore sometimes forget how much there still is to do, in particular with housing. Moreover, funding has dried up over the years. Grant applications require time and money in order to come up with an innovative proposal. It is not that the islanders feel that they had their fair share of grant funding. The crucial thing for them is to find financial models that help community groups finance their projects; some of the Trust members have therefore lobbied for the availability of community interest loans and long-term equity stakes. These instruments would allow communities to pay back loans at a low interest over a longer period of time, and at the same time keeping control over running the projects.

Adapting to a changing support structures

Theories of strategic niche management stress the importance of networking processes in diffusing novel innovations. In order for these diffusion processes to occur they emphasise the importance of 'broad' (i.e. with lots of different kinds of stakeholders) and 'deep' (i.e. with regular interactions between stakeholders) networks. In the early history of the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust, they successfully developed many of these 'deep' and 'broad' networks around them, creating a supportive and critical mass of intermediary actors that facilitated the Trust's developments. These intermediary organisations often also rely on grant funding structures so, if the funding structures become weaker for community projects, they also have an impact on intermediary organisations.

So far, the Climate Challenge Fund (CCF), the Community Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) and Scottish Investment Bank have covered the development costs for the project. In order to gain funding for the rest of the project, the Trust approached their previous partners, the Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Social Investment Scotland, but soon had to realise that conditions had changed and that they would need to look for other lenders. Initially, the Trust started to work with the Triodos Bank (having engaged with them already on their housing development programme) so that they could build on a lasting relationship. The Triodos Bank, however, got nervous about the Trust's ability to pay back the loan when following the government's continuous changes to the Feed-in-Tariff (the government kept revising the tariff rates, and sometimes at unscheduled times).

In addition to looking for some lenders, they applied for competitions and grant funding calls. Unfortunately, they did not go through to the next stage of one funding competition organised by

It is interesting to note that most communities aim for financial sustainability rather than relying on grant funding. Community interest loans and long-term equity stakes seem appropriate financial tools to facilitate such a development.

Confusions and uncertainty around the Feed-in-Tariffs seems to have had a profound impact on a lot of community energy projects. I wonder how much community activity could have been created if the Feed-in-Tariff had been more consistent.

Lukas: "We got some money from ERDF and we were very happy and then ERDF came and said oh sorry, we can't give you that money because it's feed in tariff... 2 months later Ofgem issues a bit of guidance on feed in tariff... surprise, we could have got the money but at the time they said: 'oh sorry we've spent the money', you know, it was a huge disappointment..."

Andy: "With Remi we had the technical support that we needed. With Lukas we had the financial assistance with the modelling but on a technical level now we are relying wholly on off island support and financial-wise the board of GREL have done a lot of work themselves, a heck of a lot of work themselves but at the end of the day we are reliant upon outside, obviously outside support."

Energyshare. An even bigger disappointment was to be promised European Regional Development (ERDF) money but then not getting it because of Feed-in-Tariff regulations. Two months later Ofgem issued guidance on Feed-in-Tariff and it turned out that they could have got the grant. After years of applying for funding and negotiating possible loan payments, the Trust has been promised a loan from the Co-operative Bank.

Another key issue that has been holding up the progress of the project is the weakness of the local grid. Little work has been done on the grid since the 1950s and it therefore requires a substantial upgrade to be able to transport the power produced by the additional turbine to the mainland. The current Scottish and Southern overhead cabling infrastructure is not sufficiently up-to-date to carry the extra load. This is why the Trust has to replace the current 3,000m of overhead cables with one buried in the ground. They received some funding from the Enterprise Growth Fund to carry out the work, not covering all of the costs. Once the Trust has completed the work, even then they were not able to run the turbine at its full capacity all year round (they have to deregulate it down to 220kW) because of the need to lay not only additional cabling but also create an active power management system that could deal with the differences in loads.

Since 2012

Since Remi left in 2011, the development of the project has slowed down. Over the last few months the Trust and Gigha Green Power Limited have started to engage more seriously with the project again. The grid connection upgrade needs to be arranged before the funding date runs out (Gigha would need to repay the grant). In addition, contracts that have been negotiated with consultancies and contractors two years ago would need to be re-negotiated if the Trust does not take them up soon. Most of the directors are hopeful of seeing the fourth turbine on the island in the near future. In the meantime, they have tried to utilise as much out of the existing V27s as possible, whilst continuing to look after them thoroughly and replace parts whenever needed.

Celebrating the 10th anniversary



Each year 15 March has been celebrated on the island as its most significant holiday, the Isle of Gigha's independence day. Since 2002, this day marks the end of dependency on a laird. Their tenth anniversary in 2012 was an even more meaningful date. On the day the junior pipe band from Campbeltown Grammar School started off the celebratory procedures. It was a day filled with music,

I was struck by the fact of how challenging it seems to run a portfolio of projects and try to realise a new one. Although the project officer could make quite a head start with the new project, once he was gone it was difficult to keep the momentum going.

Willie: "Until recently the Isle of Gigha was in decline with a dwindling population and economy. When Gigha's community bought the island, we realised we needed to develop in a sustainable way and that is what our three 'Dancing Ladies' are helping us to do."

Willie: "We have now created a new normality, when people take control of their own destiny, run their own affairs, build their own future, create the opportunities for their children instead of having a big house which dominates proceedings over all who live under it."

songs, speeches and dancing. Several speakers, including Alan Hobbett, spoke about the island's achievements.

Ten years on, seventy per cent of the houses have been brought up to acceptable standard. Gigha's population has risen from 98 to 157. The school roll has almost tripled. Eighteen new houses have been built for social rent, a dozen new businesses have started, including the award winning Gigha Renewable Energy Ltd. (winning awards such as the Euromoney UK). The Trust has re-opened a local quarry, creating jobs and training opportunities as well as raw materials for construction. Improvements have been made to the local dairy farms, road infrastructure, and children's play parks. The Isle of Gigha is no longer classed by the Highlands and Islands Enterprise as 'fragile'. Even so, the refurbishment of Gigha's houses still remains one of the key issues on the island. It is also one of the most difficult topics to get funding for.

Getting the turbines in place, and keeping them running, is itself a full-time job and can be seen as an end in itself; even though the idea is for them to be a means to other development ends on the island, like housing.